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TOWARDS AN AVAILABLE MOUNT

Philip Handley Stunt

It has already been suggested in this issue that there is no basic conflict between the so-called freedom of the spirit and the use of liturgical forms in the ordering of congregational worship. It has also been demonstrated that the worship of most of the Brethren¹ is already ordered by quite definitely liturgical influences however unofficial, unobtrusive and even unsuccessful they may be. We now have to consider what practical steps are open to people who are committed to brethrenism but who believe that public worship should be something more than current Assembly practice affords. In considering this therefore I shall not discuss whether the New Testament provides a pattern for worship, nor attempt to argue the case for a more liturgical approach to worship but aim to suggest to those who have already faced those problems and are convinced that reform is necessary how the revitalisation of Assembly worship might be approached, and in particular how overt liturgical means could be used without threatening basic principle. Before attempting this it will be necessary to diagnose the cause of the present trouble and estimate what may have gone wrong with Assembly worship perhaps a long time ago. Next we shall consider the removal of some obstacles to the kind of reform that seems appropriate. Finally we shall suggest the proper rôle of liturgical exercises in an assembly.

I. An Approach to the Problem

The questionings giving rise to this issue of the *Journal* are not the result of a sudden deterioration of Brethren worship. There has been little change in the liturgical practice of 'open' Brethren for generations, but the catalytical atmosphere of ecumenical discussion has precipitated an awareness of the unsatisfactoriness of things as they have long been. The original and distinctive contribution of the early Brethren to the modern history of the church may perhaps best be called the principle of recognition. They sought, somehow, to recognise in practice that the local church consisted of all in each place² who had responded to the gospel of the Cross and the Kingdom of Christ whatever their degree of maturity, their opinion on classic controversies, or their ecclesiastical connection, and it is vital to understand clearly that this principle of recognition, basic to true brethrenism,³ is not necessarily the same as that traditional body of accretions often euphemistically referred to as 'Assembly Truth'. To recognise what the Lord has already made or done or given is quite different from trying to reconstruct what He is thought once to have preferred; the earliest movements of Brethrenism were not aimed at reconstructing a particular variety of local church with a distinctive specification for worship, ministry and government however biblical it might seem but at recognising the brotherhood, gifts and authority already given among local Christians. It is instructive to observe in passing that

the particular way the pioneers were led to practise their principle of recognition was not the modern way of united evangelism but the way of united worship; so that after centuries of exclusivism founded on various tests there began to emerge congregations of evangelical Christians united on the potentially inclusive basis of their common brotherhood in Christ and membership of His local church, ready to recognise each other's gifts and the responsibilities and authority committed to each.⁴ Unfortunately within a very short time, as history so plainly records, practical expressions of this essentially inclusive principle of recognition gave way to cravings for an ideal pattern of local church. The Brethren did the very thing they had been warned against, they ceased 'to be an available mount for communion for any consistent Christian'.⁵ As a result the movement quickly developed exclusive features so distinctive that in effect a new denomination emerged beyond the bounds of which, once it had become established, the distinctive vision of brethrenism has never really spread.⁶ Thus was the promising 'just-brethrenism' of the pioneers transformed into a familiar brand of ecclesiastical apartheid. Outside the movement the whole idea of brethrenism as it might so wonderfully have been has become suspect among the churches at large and obscured and distorted by the spectre of Brethrenism as it has actually been; within the movement the highly developed and characteristic features of modern Assembly life have become so established that even the most candid and self-critical Brethren can easily believe they are essential to true brethrenism.

The relevance of this to the limited subject of Brethren worship today is simply that if Assembly worship is in the doldrums it is really only a symptom of this historic departure from the basic brethren principle of recognition. The regrettable fact is that after more than one hundred years of Brethrenism, evangelical Christians in a locality are still not found worshipping together, sharing each other's gifts, or recognising each other's callings to responsibility and authority in the local Christian community; still less are the namesakes of the early Brethren giving a lead in this direction.⁷ Moreover this defection has perhaps had more disastrous results in Brethren Assemblies than in other kinds of congregation because, depending entirely on recognition rather than on appointment and election, once an Assembly has become isolated from other Christians in its locality it is confined to recognising such gift as its own company happens to afford which, since a given Assembly may not happen to comprise the entire body of local believers, may be small, dwindling or even non-existent. In the field of worship therefore the result has been predictably that the Brethren have developed, along with their ecclesiology, a liturgiology (and with it that liturgy of which David Clines has written) so esoteric that it excludes from the Assemblies the very people without whom the concept of brethrenism cannot be realised—other members of the local church in that place.

But if Brethren worship is ever to mature it must first become the worship of the local Christian brethren in more than name. As we consider how to set about revitalising this esoteric worship it becomes clear that this cannot be done (without violating the basic principle of

recognition) unless it is by first removing the barriers that keep these people out, the obstacles they see as preventing them from coming in. Only after these obstacles have been removed and truly inclusive brethrenism becomes a characteristic of the Assembly can it expect successful reformation of its worship: reformation will flow from the influence of these other Christians with their wide variety of liturgical insights.

This is not, of course, a call to put the clock back; there is no more justification for supposing that brethren principles can only be practised by slavish imitation of the early Brethren than for supposing that New Testament principles can only be practised by aping the acts of the apostles. 'To trust in a church, whether early or contemporary is neither safe nor biblical'.⁸ The call is rather to go back in repentance⁹ to the point where the way was missed and from there to move forward to fulfil the vocation of the present. It is as if in one of those second chances the Lord of history rarely gives, there is offered to the Brethren today an opportunity to take up the torch again and to influence decisively ecumenical polity at a time when what happens in England is likely to set the pattern for practical Christian unity the world over.

II. Obstacles to a Solution

If the first step towards liturgical reform in the Assemblies is to make them really open to all believers there are clearly no prospects in merely doctoring hymn books or tinkering with the 'morning meeting'. If reformation of worship needs first a pattern of ecclesiastical life commendable to the local evangelical community the first steps towards such an 'available mount'¹⁰ will involve wider aspects of church life than we can consider here, exciting though it might be. I have therefore selected four matters (there may be others) on which the normal Brethren attitude makes it hard for other Christians to take our brethrenism seriously and which therefore need to be reconsidered by Brethren who want to see Assembly worship improved and who realise that this depends on first drawing in other Bible-honouring local Christians. The four matters each of which at present constitutes some sort of barrier to this necessary integration are our attitude to public worship, our choice of language, our use of the arts and our recognition of gift.

(a) *Our attitude to public worship*

This involves two matters so fundamental both to worship and to the practice of brethrenism that unless they can be dealt with it is doubtful whether there is any real hope of saving Assembly worship at all.

i. *Public.* As David Clines has already indicated,¹ the Brethren connotation of worship and the restricted eucharistic Zwinglianism that goes with it is unknown to most other Christians for whom worship is something much wider.¹¹ This peculiarity gives rise to the impression that the Assemblies have no real equivalent of what most Christians know as public worship. Moreover this impression is intensified by the way some Brethren contrive to distinguish between worship and communion, for

the latter of which alone the Lord's supper seems to provide, so that they appear to make no recognisable provision for the former (unless perhaps incidentally in a meeting for 'prayer and praise' the existence of which often seems to betray the liturgical inadequacy of the Lord's Supper). This particular deficiency may be understood by those versed in 'Assembly Truth' or 'God's Principles of Gathering' but in view of the record of God's people throughout the Bible and Christian history it is certainly an obstacle to true brethernism and probably excludes many Christians from the Assemblies. This can only be overcome by recovering the Biblical idea of public worship as a service which 'will enthrone God in the life of the community, not seclude him in the precincts of the sanctuary'. However hard that may prove (and it will call for some open-minded Bible study for a start) once recovered, such worship will emphasise to the Assembly its responsibility for its neighbours and will open the way for corporate obedience to neglected apostolic injunctions: e.g., by corporate prayers for local councillors, magistrates and civil servants, by acts of dedication giving liturgical recognition to the needs of the poor and by public prayer for the community's welfare such as work, labour relations, planning, production, seed time and harvest. It is, after all, the costly command to pray all kinds of prayer for all kinds of men that we are called to obey;¹² and such obedience in the course of truly public worship will also result in a healthier regard for places of worship, not just as licensed premises (albeit for weddings) beyond which activity passes 'outside the control of responsible overseeing brethren',¹³ but also as hallowed places where the community's greatest sacrifices are made and needs met.

Other benefits too will follow. Public worship which uplifts God in the community helps to teach the community His truth especially where such worship includes congregational use of forms of sound words; first, sound forms aid teaching within the fellowship at times when gift is neglected or under-developed or when for social or political reasons it becomes difficult to meet for study or teaching, and may also preserve the fellowship against assaults of error or extremism when pastors are lacking. Secondly, in really public worship sound forms teach beyond the fellowship and may profoundly affect the whole community;¹⁴ the fact that a group of righteous and happy neighbours meets to use ascriptions such as 1 Timothy 1: 17 cannot fail to have some effect on local society provided it is known that they meet and what they do when they meet.

ii. *Congregational*. The other feature of Brethren worship which surely keeps some Christians away from the Assemblies is the lack of evident congregational participation. It is curious that people who make so much of the congregation as a body should seem in their worship to be no more than a loosely associated group of individualists. The impression is probably fortified by the pronounced emphasis on autonomy of congregations and by the autocratic system of oversight, but it is true that apart from hymn-singing the whole congregation does not apparently take part in anything else (frequently including amens). 'Worship is the first concern of the church and it must be the worship of the whole church,

priests and people together'.¹⁵ If Anglicans can say this it is the more surprising that Assemblies who abhor hieratic worship should in fact have developed what looks like a caste of priestly individualists, usually plural admittedly, though serious recognition of gift would often jeopardise even this. It is therefore vital deliberately to ensure that every person has an evident and substantial part in public worship. We shall see later how this may be done, but in passing we can note that provision for such congregational participation can more than anything emphasise to those present their common, plural priesthood.¹⁶

If at present the Brethren tend to attract individualists, and if evangelical emphasis on separation often associated with individualism has obscured the assembly corporately as the salt of the earth and a city set on a hill, this imbalance could be corrected by liturgical reforms which draw in other Christians and by worship which demonstrates to the faithful and the worldly community the essential unity of the church, a doctrine which has profound devotional, instructional and evangelistic merit.

(b) *Our choice of language*

As we shall see later the ultimate choice of words for the worship of a church is its own affair. But there are three linguistic obstacles to the success of brethrenism the removal of which will facilitate the reformation of Assembly worship along the lines indicated above.

i. *Claims about ourselves and criticism of others.* First, there is a tendency to claim too much about ourselves as brethren. True, the label 'Brethren' was first pinned on by others¹⁷ but it undoubtedly arose from the pioneers' aim 'to exhibit . . . the common brotherhood of all believers'.¹⁸ Only the most credulous would now insist that the Assemblies as a whole in practice exhibit this brotherhood better than other evangelical churches; and insistence on the pioneers' claim to be 'nothing, nobody but Christians'¹⁹ however innocent, seems to many other mere Christians plainly hypocritical.²⁰ If therefore other Christians are to feel free to worship with us we must take care that we do not claim to welcome all believers while contriving to exclude many of them from the privileges and responsibilities of full fellowship by applying (even unofficially) various tests of doctrinal emphasis or interpretation of scripture.²¹ Those claiming to be 'just Christian brethren' must be careful not to take sides confessionally, officially or congregationally on matters over which equally godly, clever and Bible-honouring men have repeatedly differed. That is the path of exclusivism. It is also necessary to guard against a similar tendency to make claims about our worship, our freedom from forms, ritual or tradition, and our practical recognition of gift and authority, unless we are quite certain that these things are in fact true. How often must exaggerated or merely fanciful claims on these matters have interested many people who soon became disillusioned, and with what consequent disastrous effect on Assembly witness?

Similarly too, we must be very careful not to criticise the liturgical practices of our brethren beyond the Assemblies. We must not indicate

our disapproval of their use of common order or common prayer if, as David Clines suggests we do, we have our own common order (at least) or if we adhere tenaciously to a few favourites in our own hymn books; still less must we speak loosely about ritual, ceremony and tradition as if we had none of our own. For the eradication of habitual attitudes such as some of these which do so much to isolate us from other Christians we must obviously be looking more to our pastors and teachers than to our liturgiologists (if we have any); thus far our choice of language is more a matter of moral than liturgical principle.

ii. *Versions of the Bible*. Secondly, there is the perennial question (not peculiar to Brethren) of the AV Bible. It might be assumed after generations of thanksgiving for the Bible in English that everyone realised the importance of conducting worship in a local vernacular. Unfortunately now that scholarly translations are available it is often men who formerly led the thanksgiving who are found to be the champions of obscurity; worse, their counsels often seem to prevail. But if we believe intelligible Bible reading is a means of grace whereby the Holy Spirit reaches minds and wills, it is clearly our duty to speak up against any imprisonment of His truth in a dead language. The theatre and the academy are the places for Elizabethan English today. We must leave the public use of the AV to churches where the spectacular and the intellectual are the main pre-occupations.²² This is of course a topic on which evangelicals are divided, and obviously we must first be convinced about what is intelligible; but we must not assume that the AV is intelligible just because we think we understand it; neither when choosing a version for liturgical purposes must we tolerate greater obscurity than we allow for teaching; the language of worship is too potent a teaching influence. Can any intelligent and honest English Christian still say of the AV with Cowper,

‘The Sacred Book no longer suffers wrong
Bound in the fetters of an unknown tongue
But speaks with plainness art could never mend
What simplest minds could soonest comprehend’?

I doubt it. Why after all are the NEB and RSV selling so well on the church bookstalls? Why is the RSV ‘being used more and more as the basis of new commentaries²³’ if not because they not only clarify AV obscurities but speak in the common tongue and liberate the Word? If we still give thanks for such a blessing we must accept it and discontinue public use of anything less than the best. The ludicrous alternative is to deny the very freedom for which we give thanks! Even if the early Brethren did not think the English Reformation went far enough, many of the Christians desperately needed in Assembly worship today appear to be far more keenly aware than most Brethren that they still owe much more to their common Reformation heritage than to the particular ecclesiastical mutation which produced their denominational characteristics. No serious advocates of the crucial liturgical reform with which we are concerned should therefore allow sentimental conservatives or excitable reactionaries to force the clock back 350 years and deny ordinary people

the right to have the Bible customarily read at public worship in the language they speak. Brethren who really want to practise brethernism can set an example to the rest of the churches by resolving with Erasmus writing 450 years ago to 'fight absolutely the opinion of those who refuse to the common people the right to read the divine letters in the popular language'.

iii. '*Brethrenese*'. Thirdly, there is the characteristic manner of speech apparently peculiar to the Brethren. This is not just the celebrated un-written liturgy; it is a whole verbal idiom quite distinct from that of other Christians. Many Brethren, of course, deny its existence; believing all they say is biblical and often having little contact with other Christians, they do not realise that even their daily speech may betray them as Brethren and that instructed evangelicals may recognise a 'Brethren' speaker by his style, even when his topic is main-stream orthodoxy. But isolation is the key; however innocently they may have arisen, these shibboleths are the result of a century of exclusivism, and they are also clearly inconsistent with brethernism and with the vital requirement that worship should be intelligible. If other believers are to share Assembly worship this is an obvious field for reform, though ironically, success depends on prior disappearance of other exclusive features affording freedom for other Christian brethren to influence our language at all!

The choice of a Bible translation and the use of an esoteric idiom both go to the heart of worship. All the great Christian liturgies have been rooted in local, national or imperial cultures; we too must aim at a genuinely contemporary and local liturgy. It must not of course be self-consciously contemporary like recent 'with it' services involving pop and slang; these are less than contemporary, merely fashionable. And it must be neither more nor less local than natural frontiers dictate, which in Britain will probably be increasingly national. Whatever happens there can surely never be a case for an international English-speaking Brethren liturgical lingo.

(c) *Our use of the arts*

A somewhat studied disregard of the arts by Brethren is another obstacle to that integration of other Christians without which brethernism cannot really flourish. God's people have always wanted to express their devotion by vocal and visual creative means (a fact which the Bible recognises and does not deprecate)²⁴ and anyone purporting to practise brethernism must recognise this too. The consequent variety in worship (not necessarily complexity, as some insist) need not jeopardise Biblical simplicity (which has nothing to do with representational art, plain décor and indifferent singing). There is after all a natural connection between beauty and worship: since the liturgy of worship is but a link between the orderliness of God's truth and the spontaneous feelings of the worshipper, considered expressions of worship founded on revealed truth will tend to be beautiful, beauty being in essence no more than order appreciated. And where the arts are concerned 'beauty perceptible by the senses can be a sign of grace'²⁵ that is, of God reaching out to the worshipper, though

clearly liturgical art must always be purposeful (not merely ornamental), Biblical (i.e. true to the gospel) and self-effacing (by which I mean that although it may of course shock us, it must not do so wantonly nor must it draw attention to the artist). Thus, provided they remember that the liturgical function of the arts is to bring God's mighty works before men and not, as some Puritans supposed, to bring man's mighty works before God, the Brethren have nothing to fear from a full liturgical use of the arts. To exclude or ignore the arts is to make less likely the practice of true brethernism and, consequently, vital worship.

The removal of this particular obstacle to the necessary integration of other Christians will call for some very fresh thinking on a variety of subjects, some of which Brethren do not normally regard as related to worship at all. In addition, evangelicals as a whole have long suffered from the misconception that the arts are essentially carnal and this has either driven artistic ability out of our churches or at least made it shrivel up so that developed artistic gift is rare. The first and obvious step must therefore be to challenge local Christian artists to relate their ability to our belief.

To take very briefly indeed one example, architecture²⁶ affords opportunities to rethink the application of brethren principles to the arts (not that much Brethren architecture appears ever to have been thought through). It is for example 'un-brethren' to keep producing buildings like gospel halls which are not only often unlovely (and to many Christians unlovable) but inadequate for the liturgical needs of many local Christians. If Christian Brethren build at all they must provide and hold on trust for the whole Christian community buildings which the whole Christian community can unashamedly own and, of course, find suited to its purpose. Similarly it must not be supposed that only 'Brethren' architects will be reliable; they may be of course for 'exclusives', or even for economists who want pop/trad halls, but their exclusive employment tends to harden the stereotype of the gospel hall. Apart from the aesthetics and economics of structure and fabric, brethren principles must primarily be applied to the internal details of congregational buildings so that they function liturgically when used. There is, of course, no need to wait for a new building before experimenting though existing premises will impose certain limitations in many cases. Here we can only mention in the barest outline one or two examples of the sort of matters to which our principles can be applied. Among the more obvious of these will be the mode and location of what many Christians will call the administration of the sacraments. Today Brethren themselves differ over the position of the table; here we can only remark that the central position most Brethren prefer is acceptable to many other evangelicals including many Anglicans who would like to re-site their tables in the transept; at the same time there is obvious symbolical significance in sitting around only three sides of the table and breaking bread from what Anglicans call the north side position. Equally important is the siting of the baptistry. The pursuit of true brethernism will obviously soon necessitate provision for the practice

of baptism 'in both kinds' and it seems entirely consistent with the principle of congregational participation to enact the drama of baptism as centrally as that of the Lord's death. This is already the practice in most Baptist and Congregational churches; what seems liturgically peculiar is to break bread but not to baptise in the body of the congregation (as most Assemblies do) or to baptise but not break bread in the body of the congregation (as many Anglicans do—though their symbolism of baptism near the door of the church is eloquent). The sacraments are of course not the only means of grace with liturgical consequences in architecture. Others are, obviously, the Bible itself (including visual presentations of its message) and prayer. Briefly, the former requires deliberate recognition of our submission to the word (at least by a lectern and preaching stand if not also by ceremonial entry or opening of the book itself as Stephen Winward has suggested), and the latter requires provision for kneeling (at least in space if not in comfort!).

Where music is concerned, the traditional Brethren attitude which is an obstacle to reform of Assembly worship has already begun to crumble among 'open' Brethren. Instrumental accompaniment of hymn-singing even on Sunday mornings is increasing but full admittance of music to worship involves more than that. It must be remembered that though religious music is regarded by many Christians as merely a vehicle for words, it is, like the other arts, a meaningful form of expression for its maker. This means that for a start the music chosen as a vehicle for words must be apt, and not only metrically so; it has been rightly said that most of the battles over Sankey and sentiment arise from confusion of joy with jollity. Once admitted, music can be an invaluable aid to ensuring congregational participation; one obvious reform will be to revive the band or ensemble which was often a feature of worship in churches before organs were widely introduced; those who can play should be encouraged to do so whenever they can. At the same time the truth that a joyful noise is more important than a skilful rendering must not obscure the paramount principle that we must give our best; the tone-deaf are few, and although musical people may deplore poor playing or poor music, the tone-deaf never object to good music well played! As singing is the only universally acknowledged congregational act (apart perhaps from sitting!) those who have difficulty in knowing where to begin with reforms may find the introduction of new congregational hymns a suitably thin end of the liturgical wedge. To accommodate all the local Christian brethren the aim must be congregational familiarity with the greatest hymns whoever wrote them, and those psalms and canticles which have been the back-bone of the worship of God's people down the ages. A particularly exclusive feature of Brethren congregational activity is neglect of the Psalter. Although there are some metrical psalms in Brethren hymn books the boycott of the Psalter is principally due to emotional attitudes to the way some Christians sing them (e.g. plainsong, antiphonally, anglican chant system). But true brethrenism tries to meet the need of the whole local church which means readiness to sing psalms in all the ways popular with local Christians, even perhaps pioneering of the so-called New Testament Psalms²⁷ or the works of Fr. Gelineau.²⁸

Finally, we must remember that music is an ancient aid to teaching (already recognised in the use of choruses for children for example); we must not overlook the well attested value to singer and hearer of the great musical settings of the Bible (e.g. Messiah, Elijah) neither must we ignore the obvious opportunities of the great Church festivals, provided that music is always used in accordance with our liturgical principles and never presented as a mere concert.

(d) *Our recognition of gift*

The suggestion so far has been that Assembly worship has for long suffered from the failure of the Brethren to practice in the Christian community the principle of recognition which is the essence of true brethernism. The break-down began as soon as Brethren started to reconstruct ideal New Testament churches by applying various tests which effectively isolated them from other Christians so that their Assemblies no longer represented the community of local Christian brethren. Once so isolated they had to confine their recognition of gift and authority to accredited members of their own Assemblies, with the result that their worship has sometimes become very peculiar as it depends largely on the recognition of gift which is often manifestly absent from the Assembly, being found elsewhere in the local Christian community. It has therefore been suggested that in such cases Brethren worship can only be revitalised by reopening the Assembly to a more representative variety of local Christians and their gift. As we have seen however, this involves first dealing with certain obstacles, three of which we have now considered, (the prevailing attitudes to public worship, the choice of language and the use of art). We now turn to the final obstacle selected for attention here which links up the others and may indeed need little further comment after what has been said or implied already. This obstacle is, of course, the travesty of 'recognition' which most Brethren accord to 'gift' (the Lord's gift of gifted people to His church),²⁹ when it happens to lie outside their own Assembly, or Assemblies of a similar kind. Today other evangelicals are sometimes beginning to recognise gift within their own fellowships rather better than many Assemblies have ever done, but the distinctive challenge which has always faced the Brethren is to show the churches how to recognise gift *across* denominational barriers, to recognise and esteem their brethren in Christ whoever they may be, and to recognise, encourage and submit to their gift wherever it is found. The applications of this idea to other aspects of assembly life such as ministry, government and pastoral oversight are exciting indeed but here we must confine attention to liturgy.

If it is true that a less esoteric attitude to public worship, a more imaginative and charitable choice of language, and a less distrustful and more thankful use of the arts would encourage our local Christian neighbours to take a new look at brethernism, how very much more would be achieved by a practical recognition of their own gift. The former would indeed begin to encourage some of them to depend on *us* and to begin to worship with us; but only when the latter reciprocal ingredient is added

do we begin to depend on some of *them* as they actually take part in our worship which in the very act becomes theirs, theirs and ours, the worship of Christian brethren indeed. If there is anything biblical about true brethernism it surely is that its basic principle of recognition is a practical expression of that interdependence which is characteristic of the body of Christ as revealed through St. Paul.

In practical terms this step simply means that we must deliberately treat liturgical gift like any other, whether we find it in ourselves or in others.³⁰ Just as we should submit to the ministry of those apt to teach, the authority of those to whom power is given and the care of those pastorally gifted³¹ (and in each case to no other), and just as we seek (for example) administrative guidance from those with administrative gift, and indeed readily accept a thousand and one facilitating helps from all manner of gifted brethren,³² so we must recognise and accept as gifts to the whole church *for the work of worship* those apt in liturgical matters. We shall only find a way of worship truly available to all Christians if we seek, encourage and follow those by whose gifts (literary, oratorical, musical etc.) the whole church can profit liturgically. To take but one example, we all recognise that not everyone can lead extempore public prayer in an intelligible way, and most of us value more highly the leading of those who can. But it remains for most Assemblies to do anything realistic about giving practical recognition to this gift. We must not of course fall in the snare of confusing natural endowment with spiritual gift but neither need we groundlessly assume that spiritual gift will not be connected with natural endowment. And we must encourage the cultivation of discovered gift by providing opportunity for the practice and study without which it can never be profitably developed or employed. Some of the clearest (and briefest!) and most uplifting extempore prayers one can hear anywhere come from men well acquainted with the rich heritage of Christian liturgical experience. If our so-called Brethernism in practice excludes them from the local fellowship we have only ourselves to thank if our worship is the poorer; (far worse, we also carry on our own heads the responsibility for not ministering to other Christians the insight we have;) and unless we allow those already among us who are similarly apt, to learn from history and to profit from the gift of those gifted but outside 'the Assemblies' we may in fact be quenching the Spirit whose freedom we claim to champion.

Aptitude for extempore prayer is a handy and obvious example but there are many gifts relevant to worship some of which can only flourish in a more liturgical atmosphere, though this need not exclude others. Where liturgy is concerned however, literary and oratorical gift is of quite especial importance; its presence may be detected by the ability to read Scripture in public, to select or coin contemporary similes more meaningful than those of oriental agriculture for example, and to invent aids to teaching and worship such as catechisms, choruses, creeds, confessions, versicles, responses and collects which can inspire, instruct, enliven and enlighten those within, beyond and on the fringe of the local fellowship. And if it springs from a truly fraternal regard such recognition of liturgical gift will

not lead to the universal imposition of a uniform pattern of worship but rather to a variety of manifestations which can only promote the independence and coherence of the church in each place.

III. Liturgical Brethrenism

(a) *Objections*

Before we move on to a few suggestions for detailed application of these principles it is necessary to deal briefly with the two most common and least defensible objections to the use of liturgical forms.

i. *Ritual*. First, there is the idea that any form of liturgy is (the murky truth to tell) basically an attempt to create a religious atmosphere or arouse religious feelings by pandering to fallen instincts with sensual ritualism, a view very often held without regard for the very obvious 'Brethren' liturgy of which David Clines has written. But 'abuse is not a valid argument against right use'.³³ Someone else's failure to use liturgy properly does not condemn liturgy. We can hardly emphasise too strongly that to induce feelings is certainly not our object. Ritual is not intended to help us to *feel* but to help us to exercise that faith by which we *know*. Just as it is possible 'to have forms but not to look to them for life',³⁴ so ceremonies need be 'neither dark nor dumb' and not all ritual has 'blinded the people and obscured the glory of God'.³⁵ There is nothing necessarily wrong with ritual; what is wrong, is ritual thoughtlessly or ignorantly observed, or ritual which is meaningless or which means error. We should just notice, therefore, at least three valid objects of a planned and efficient liturgy already hinted at by other contributors and on which all writers on the subject seem to be agreed though some identify more than three.³⁶ First, liturgy is a means of ensuring that worship is *Congregational*, that every member of the assembly takes an adequate, apparent and real part in its public worship. This was clearly a feature of the worship of New Testament Christians who were repeatedly found acting together.³⁷ A firm grasp of this will help us to overcome the relevant obstacle referred to above. Secondly, liturgy is a means of ensuring that congregational worship is *orderly*. This is not only a question of bad manners or disorderly behaviour but of disciplining worship at a deeper level too. Obviously liturgy can ensure simplicity and dignity by maintaining a balance between the extremes of riotous spontaneity and excessive complexity; but at a deeper level liturgical control can ensure that the oral and dramatic expressions of the worshipping priesthood are consistent with the doctrine they confess.³⁸ It is fundamental that liturgy must be based on theology and not vice versa; truly biblical liturgy can preserve us from the theological aberrations which can creep in where there are no liturgical sanctions; and of course it follows that those with liturgical gift must first have a sound grasp of doctrine. Thirdly, liturgy is a means of ensuring that the orderly activity of the worshipping congregation is *intelligible and edifying* to themselves and to others. The 1549 Prayer Book was expressly intended 'that the people might continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God'. It is not sufficient that the grace and glory of God should be proclaimed; they must also challenge men, so that as well as

expressing repentance and dependence it may be evident that they know themselves committed and bound by their profession.³⁹ No church which keeps these three objects in sight need fear the full exercise of liturgical gift.

ii. *Liberty*. The second common objection is that liturgy is a threat to the so called 'liberty of the Spirit'. Here again the objection may be traced at least in part to a wrong assumption. It is plainly ridiculous that churches often regarded (though sometimes only by themselves) as 'live' churches should eschew the use of forms simply because the forms themselves do not appear to have brought life to so-called 'dead' churches! There is no rational basis for thinking that worship using prescribed actions or forms of words is worth less than worship without them, and there is certainly no biblical basis for it.⁴⁰ If forms cannot make worship spiritual, so neither can their absence preserve it from being unspiritual. This second objection is also partly founded on the belief, already mentioned, that Christians should only do what the early churches did and that because their worship was characterised by spontaneity we must shun liturgical forms. There is however abundant evidence for the use of liturgical forms by the New Testament churches⁴¹ and apart from the fact that we are not the New Testament churches, it seems generally more relevant to ask rather whether the forms developed under the pretence of being no forms achieve better results than openly devised forms can. In other words, liturgy or 'liberty', is the result desirable and dependable in the experience of most Christians today? Fundamentally this objection to liturgy results from a mistaken notion of the way the Spirit works. This, of course, goes to the root of brethrenism: the true freedom of the Spirit in congregational worship will only be found when His gifts to the congregation for liturgical purposes are given full practical recognition. It is not really therefore a question of liturgy *or* liberty but of seeking for liturgy (order) *in* liberty, by letting the Spirit, the Lord of the church, lead the church through His gifts into the pattern which the church recognises and follows in the resulting liturgical order, with or without forms. This is the tension between freedom and order in ministry and worship which underlies all the relevant passages in St. Paul and which gives meaning, in worship as in other matters, to the statement that 'where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom'.

(b) *Phased reform*

Once an Assembly has faced up to the principal matters which may need attention before its worship can be revitalised at all and has determined to recognise liturgical gift wherever it is found in the local Christian fellowship it can begin to consider the practical role of liturgical devices in its worship; and provided the three above-stated objects of liturgy are borne clearly in mind the unfettered Spirit will develop His own local patterns be they municipal, regional or national. Few suggestions therefore will really be necessary here except perhaps to prompt initiative. But, someone will ask, what can possibly be done in an Assembly where there seems absolutely no prospect of tackling, overtly at least, any of the obstacles mentioned above? And even should the whole Assembly favour

the liberating process (de-exclusivisation?) which must surely take a long time, can nothing be done about worship meanwhile? It seems to me that not only can much be done meanwhile, provided the campaign is mounted with discretion, patience and imagination, but that provided the paramount objective of serving the whole Christian community is kept in sight, the steps which can be taken on the liturgical front will themselves prove to be the key to a broader liberation of the whole life of the Assembly. I suggest the task can be approached in four phases which may be viewed either as successive chronological stages or as four increasingly wide and deep views of one operation. Some churches will pass through the stages one by one, others will find one or more of the phases, even all four perhaps, developing simultaneously.

i. *Tidying up*. First comes a simple operation mainly concerned with matters of orderliness, personal behaviour and courtesy, any of which may be operating to exclude more scrupulous Christians. Many details we can leave to the consciences and wills of those gifted with open eyes and influence in each Assembly, but a few specifically liturgical matters ripe for immediate attention which is unlikely to disturb anyone, fall into two groups. Most of them are obviously negative and will be aimed at the removal of any sloppy, casual attitudes such as singing with hands in pockets, habitual unpunctuality, and disturbance of meetings e.g. by duty janitors walking up to the front; similarly there must be firm discouragement of, for example, 'prayers that preach' and long prayers generally, the customary pre-reading of hymns and the interruption of the service by letters of commendation or notices (unless of course the latter immediately precede intercessions in which they feature). More positively, opportunities will be found, for example, to hand out Bibles as well as hymn books to strangers and to encourage the use of such uncontroversial formulae as, for example, 'let us pray', and the habit of a really audible congregational 'amen' said by men, women and children.

ii. *Salvage*. The next stage involves building on existing liturgical features in such a way that accepted good practices are improved and equally good and theoretically acceptable but at present deliberately scorned practices are introduced. In this phase the focus sharpens somewhat and questions of our attitude to worship, repentance and giving may be brought forward in ministry along with more specific and perhaps stronger warnings about unworthy sharing of the Lord's supper, and other biblical teaching relevant to worship. Clearly it is at this stage that a sermon should be introduced if at all possible as part of what many Christians will call the 'ante-communion'. At the same time special attention can be given, for example, to dealing with the language problems mentioned already, to the choice of music, speed of singing, the variety of hymns available (aiming ultimately at a really worthy selection from the nation's hymnody) and also to raising the standard of oral reading of Scripture. This last can be encouraged by arranging for sizeable portions, if not whole letters, to be read to the assembly from time to time in place of an address. It will also be wise to introduce at this stage the freedom to kneel for prayer though this can initially be confined to prayer meetings.

The rather shy observance of the Christian calendar should be developed too, both as a teaching aid and a link with others and there should also be some endeavour to make the physical act of giving (money) a really significant congregational act,⁴² possibly by distinguishing between giving for the poor and giving for expenses of the fellowship, possibly by making the congregation bring its gifts to the table. Obviously this phase must begin unobtrusively; but it should ultimately involve boldly claiming freedoms which at present only exist in theory such as the right to initiate (give out?) the Lord's Prayer, to invite congregational participation in antiphonal reading or singing of psalms, and to use certain responses. (How often have I refrained in a morning meeting from calling out 'lift up your hearts!' because I realised just in time (or was it too soon?) that the wonderful response to a *Sursum Corda* could not be expected). The purpose of this whole phase is, as it were, to 'limber up' the present format, to exploit all admitted possibilities so that it is flexible enough for the next phase to follow.

iii. *Available mount.* So far, possibly over a considerable period, the process will have proceeded largely by stealth with no sudden or radical changes; and of course the leaven will have had to go right through church life and not be confined to the 'morning meeting'. But as its influence spreads and the obstacles already referred to begin to dissolve, other Christians will be free, tempted, and I believe, ready to come and join in, and as soon as they do a third stage will begin. Brethren worship in its former, exclusive, peculiar and introspective form will begin to disappear; there will appear instead what may truly be called an assembly of local Christian brethren at worship. And the sooner a given Assembly can demonstrably and justifiably regard itself as such the sooner will the transformation be complete. From then on, therefore, the emphasis will cease to be on improving or reforming *our* worship but on seeking the form of worship which is to be *characteristic of the fellowship* of truly united *Christians in our locality*. As other Christians come in, the basic brethren principle of recognition will come into its own as the assembly allows its worship to be guided by the Holy Spirit and submits to the leading of those gifted in liturgical matters. Undoubtedly this will prove to be the most challenging stage of all and one which will surely find out the reality of our brethrenism, as the assembly, recognising gift wherever it appears, learns to discipline its characteristic freedom in submission to the pattern the Holy Spirit indicates through the liturgical gift He provides. In this advanced stage therefore we shall almost certainly find that however much spontaneity is retained certain liturgical features will become necessary and these will probably emerge along the lines of the great creeds and historic formulae such as the Gloria, The Lord's Prayer, The Agnus Dei (not in Latin of course) and others; equally probably will there have to be some form(s) of general confession and declaration(s) of forgiveness, some recognition that very many Christians will want to kneel at worship, and some prominence given to the Bible, both symbolically as by exhibiting it open and by having a reading desk, as well as by using a lectionary of some sort. It will also be during this phase that there will be seen to be a

place for the arts in their proper role in the development of worship in the beauty of holiness (beauty=order appreciated).

iv. *Gift and pattern.* In the final phase, having cleared away the rubbish, salvaged the valuable and imported the best, we should be able to identify as a meaningful whole the emerging pattern of congregational worship in a given local assembly. This will in no sense be the end of the road, the discovery of a pattern proof against the universal tendency to exclusivism. It will not even mean that the emergent pattern will not change with the years; the opposite seems likely, provided new gift is not excluded. But it also seems likely that the pattern will have certain more or less constant features and that these will be more like than unlike the broad patterns of Christian worship for much of its long history.

David Clines has pointed out that for most Christians worship is more than adoration. He has also referred to the urge which Christians have to confess their sins and the reasonableness of doing so congregationally. He has drawn attention to the 'rhythm of action and reaction' and Stephen Winward has likewise drawn attention to the 'dialogue of revelation and response' between God and man, things which have always been basic to ordinary Christian worship. Further, the private and congregational experience of generations of saints itself reveals an almost universal pattern of devotions which we cannot ignore. It begins with conviction of sin and the presence of God leading to *repentance*, it continues with a considered rehearsal of the *gospel* of the grace of God in the ears of the forgiven, incredulous but exultant penitent, and it culminates in resolute expressions of *faith* and devotion leading to obedience to the Saviour and dedication to others.⁴³ Taking together therefore all these features it is very likely that in really open assemblies where the gifts of the Spirit are properly honoured, the ultimate liturgical pattern will partake of them all. Certainly the biblical principles of many of the Christians who will worship in the assembly (if true brethernism ever becomes more than an ecclesiastical mirage) will lead the principal service of public worship away from a merely commemorative act towards a fuller exercise of faith and love.⁴⁴ And it seems to me that practical recognition of the idea of worship as dialogue combined with the liturgical experience of the church in our land which other Christians can bring in from outside the Assemblies as we now know them, could, with the aid of a genuine practice of the principle of recognition of gift, produce a liturgical order second to none and acceptable to a very large majority of evangelical Christians.

As such a liturgy evolves we shall therefore in this fourth and final stage of the reform of Assembly worship find ourselves looking for full employment of the local liturgical gift in each kind of devotional expression which forms part of the full orb'd pattern of worship (e.g. those expressions which could be labelled with the words *repentance*, *gospel* and *faith* as used in the paragraph above). And in particular as well as producing individual contributions, extempore or prepared, we shall expect to find the congregation learning to look to those with liturgical gift to devise and prepare material for congregational use. Within a given

fellowship, of course, the form and detailed content of such a liturgy and even its predictability will vary with the occasion or according to the guidance of those responsible; but such a liturgy will afford a unique opportunity to achieve a balance between the spontaneous and the pre-ordered and will ensure that neither dominates the services. In the expression of its *repentance*, for example, the assembly will obviously require the liturgical draftsman's gift in the preparation of congregational confession(s); again in the expression of the *gospel*, the good news of God's grace, the assembly may call on the liturgical draftsman's gift for public proclamations of forgiveness, for prayers such as may precede the breaking of bread and the dramatic administration of the elements before the congregation and to each of them, and possibly also, for example, in the composition of gospel canticles. Other expressions of the gospel such as public confessions of faith by using a creed (clearly calling for the liturgical draftsman's gift) or by a sermon or by group study of the Word are at the same time also expressions of *faith* as the congregation together responds to the gospel. Here the draftsman may produce numerous expressions of congregational response by hymn, doxology, prayer, intercession and dedication of gifts. And of course at various points in a service there will doubtless be other biddings responses and prayers.

So far from being unbiblical there is not even anything 'un-brethren' about such practices, as witness the Brethren hymn writers of the 19th Century. Moreover there is no need to be shut up to one general confession, one general thanksgiving, one 'prayer of humble access', etc. We may expect a congregation to be familiar with two or three or half a dozen of each at any one time and to learn many more over generations; and through regular use they are bound to have a deep effect on the private devotional life of individuals, quite the reverse in fact of the process referred to by David Clines on page 7, not to mention their teaching value within and outside the church, to which we have already referred.

Fundamental to all that has been said is the conviction that a thriving liturgy at once *congregational*, *orderly* and *edifying* can only be found in congregations where all the brethren of Christ in a place are as free from liturgical sanctions as from legal exclusivism, where the unity of the Body is strongly felt because the gifts of the members are freely recognised and indispensable, and where the united fellowship is not only *seen* to be separate (different) *from*, but *known* to be unsacrificed *to* the worldly place in which it is set. In a fellowship like that a form of worship such as we have anticipated could go a very long way indeed to marrying the needs, traditions and experience of all the brethren for whom the 'mount' must be made 'available'. Its central feature remains the breaking of bread the memorial aspects of which are especially treasured by Brethren; its dialogue of proclamation and response will be familiar to many other

non conformists and could be more satisfactory than the present experience of many of them; and its overall pattern of *repentance, gospel and faith* should be familiar to members of the Church of England in whose forms of Common Prayer a similar pattern is discernible.⁴⁵

But of course to resolve is one thing, to overcome, quite another especially when the principal reason for conservatism is neither traditional cultural nor educational, but emotional, and the emotion fear. Nothing is better calculated to encourage that preservation of forms, interpretations or even beliefs which our Lord so clearly associated with vain worship;⁴⁶ and in the present case perhaps the greatest enemy will be the fear of having been unsound after all. For a successful conclusion of many of the matters we have discussed any Assembly will really depend far more on a genuine recognition of teaching rather than of liturgical gift. Even then imagination and courage will be required at every step. In the matter of liturgy the Brethren must stop 'blowing ecclesiastical bubbles' and 'playing church'⁴⁷ and get down to their vocation, a vocation which might be expressed in terms chosen by the bishops writing at Lambeth in 1930, 'The vision which rises before us is that of a church genuinely catholic, loyal to all truth, and gathering into its fellowship all "who profess and call themselves Christians", within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to the present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole body of Christ . . . It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled'. But in terms of the worship of the local Christian brethren this vision will never be fulfilled until we broaden our minds and frankly recognise that 'it takes all sorts to make a world; or a church. This may be even truer of a church'.⁴⁸ In 1845 when the ecclesiastical principles of the Brethren movement were put to the test 'the brethren in their first great emergency found themselves absolutely unprepared . . .'.⁴⁹ In the present national and ecumenical situation the Assemblies today face not so much an emergency as a call to a great emergence. Shall we too be unprepared?

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A capital 'B' will be used to indicate the Brethren, or Brethrenism, as popularly recognized, a small 'b' to indicate the more ideal concept of all Christians as brethren and what I shall call the practice of true brethrenism. Similarly, 'Assembly' will indicate a church Brethren would recognize as an Assembly; 'assembly' will be merely an acceptable synonym for 'church' or 'congregation'.
2. J. N. Darby described them as "all consistent Christians", people later more often referred to as "sound in faith and godly in life". See note 5 infra.
3. *True* brethrenism is to be clearly distinguished from Brethrenism as the world has come to regard it.
4. Although I cannot develop the idea here, I have deliberately said '*potentially inclusive*' because in its most thoroughgoing and promising form the movement hardly got off the ground. True, at the beginning, recognition of the *brotherhood* of believers was certainly given practical expression, and there have always been Assemblies, though sometimes few, which have facilitated united worship for Christians of all kinds. In some degree too, recognition of *gifts* of ministry (especially of evangelism, though not generally of other gifts) has been practised, although

except for the very early years and the latest developments in the most open Assemblies, it has been almost entirely confined to recognising gift within Brethren Assembly circles. In the realm of *government* and pastoral oversight, however, the principle has probably never been worked out in practice at all. In the words of Dr. Charles Sims of Exeter at a Conference of Brethren at Swanwick (1966) we have got stuck where we were left 100 years ago!

5. In 1833 J. N. Darby wrote 'I do trust that you will keep infinitely far from sectarianism. The great body of Christians who are accustomed to religion, are scarce capable of understanding anything else, as the mind constantly tends there . . . you are nothing, nobody, but Christians, and the moment you cease to be an available mount for communion for any consistent Christian, you will go to pieces or help the evil'. *Letters* in three volumes Vol. 1 p. 18.
6. Younger readers may not have read the historic 'Open Letter to Assemblies of "Brethren"', published in *The Harvester* nearly 20 years ago; several of the signatories are now members of CBRF. Only brief quotation is possible here. 'One of the most tragic aspects of Church history is the record of the devitalised and pathetic survivals which have issued from great movements of the Spirit of God . . . Nor do the Assemblies seem any exception . . . some of the basic principles . . . are no longer in evidence . . . a puny sect . . . has arisen . . .' In the same issue the late Montague Goodman wrote, ' . . . it is becoming patent to all who are prepared to think fearlessly, that Assemblies as a whole . . . have, in practice, ceased to become witnesses to the vital truth of the unity of the Body of Christ and have relapsed into the sectarian condition of the church systems from which they originally withdrew . . . In fact brethren today are not the brethren of 100 years ago—we no longer stand where they stood'. 'Where Have we Drifted?' *The Harvester* 1947 vol. 24 No. 9.
7. This belief is borne out by evidence from a variety of evangelical Christians up and down the UK outside Assembly circles, by the prevailing pattern of ministry within the Assemblies and by enquiry about the composition of Assembly congregations when visiting Assemblies and other churches in the Home Counties. Members with evidence leading to a contrary conclusion in their own locality might be able to furnish the basis of some useful CBRF research.
8. A. Cole *The Body of Christ—a N.T. Image of the Church* (Hodder) 1964 p. 70. This book is one of the *Christian Foundations* series published under the auspices of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion.
9. Bearing in mind that the Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists all boast Revival fellowships it is worth recalling the words of a perfecter of true brethrenism reported at the CBRF AGM in 1965 that 'the Brethren don't want a research fellowship; they want a repentance fellowship'.
10. J. N. Darby *op et loc cit.*
11. As Mr. Clines's article has already demonstrated, frequent implied comparison with the Church of England seems inevitable because (a) so many Brethren regard the Church of England as the worst example of liturgy, form and ceremony this side (?) of Rome; (b) so many of the evangelicals who might be expected to join in reformed Assembly worship are Anglicans; (c) the liturgy of the Church of England has so profoundly influenced the worship of all liturgically-minded nonconformists. In this last connexion see A. E. Pearton, *The Prayer Book Tradition in the Free Churches*, (Jas. Clarke) 1966, an exciting book pioneering a new field and including an enormous bibliography. (Incidentally, over 1 per cent of CBRF members are now members of local Anglican churches and half of those are clergy. Other denominations are of course also represented.)
12. 1 Tim. 2: 1-4.
13. 'Open Letter on Tongues' *The Witness* October 1965.
14. See in this connexion J. A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great* (Darton Longmann & Todd) paperback 1960 in English, chap. 13.
15. 'Report on Prayer Book Worship' issued by the Lambeth Conference, 1958.
16. 1 Pet. 2: 5, 9.
17. See for example A. Miller, *The Brethren, their Origin, Progress and Testimony* (the first substantial history of the movement, to about 1870) 'They were spoken of as "Brethren from Plymouth"'. This naturally resulted in the designation "Plymouth Brethren" which has been applied to them—sometimes in derision—ever since!

18. W. Collingwood quoted by G. H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves* p. 104.
19. J. N. Darby *op et loc sit*.
20. Any Assembly which claims to be 'open' clearly implies this claim too even though studiously avoiding the word 'open' or refusing to 'belong to the Brethren'.
21. We must not overlook the fact that many Bible-studying evangelicals really are as puzzled as many Brethren are to find they have not reached the same conclusions as the Brethren and been swept into the Assemblies!
22. 2 Tim. 3: 7; 4: 3.
23. F. F. Bruce, 'One Bible, Many Versions' *The Christian* 9th Oct. 1964.
24. Exod. 35: 31.
25. J. Gelineau, S. J., *Voices and Instruments in Christian Worship* (Burns & Oates) translated C. Howell, S.J. On this subject see also H. Walford Davies and Harvey Grace, *Music and Worship* (Eyre & Spottiswoode) 1935.
26. On this aspect of the subject see S. S. Smalley, *Building for Worship* (Hodder, Christian Foundations series) 1967, an admirable book which should be studied by all concerned, (especially those unconcerned).
27. *New Testament Psalms* is a liturgical experiment by the well-known Vicar of Roydon, formerly of Woodford. He has pointed for singing to Anglican chants a selection of about 50 gospel and other NT passages, using, variously, AV, RSV or NEB texts. Some are very short and compare interestingly with many C.S.S.M. Choruses. About 20 of the settings are also published separately in individual leaflets. All available from the publisher, Christopher Wansey, The Vicarage, Roydon, Essex.
28. *The Psalms—A New Translation* (Fontana) 1963 by a team of scholars in co-operation with The Grail, is specially arranged for singing to the psalmody of Fr. Gelineau.
29. For a recent definition see J. I. Packer, 'The Holy Spirit and the Local Congregation' *The Churchman* June 1964 (Church Book Room Press) 'Is there a common formula covering such varied abilities and activities as those listed in (say) 1 Cor. 12: 28-30? Yes, there is; it is this: a spiritual gift is *an ability to express and communicate in some way one's knowledge of Christ and His grace.* (author's italics) It is not a mere natural endowment, though usually it is given through the sanctifying of a natural endowment. Spiritual gifts have a spiritual content: they display the riches of Christ, by manifestation of something received from Him. All forms of service which do this involve an exercise of spiritual gifts, for Him (1 Cor. 12: 7) and edifying (cf Eph. 4: 12, 16)'. The issue includes two other valuable papers on 'The Holy Spirit and Revival' and 'The Holy Spirit and Holy Scripture'.
30. Col. 4: 17. The question has been asked, 'What was the neglected gift of Archippus?'
31. 1 Tim. 5: 17; 1 Thess. 5: 12, 13; Heb. 13: 17.
32. Acts 6: 3; 1 Cor. 16: 16.
33. S. F. Winward, *The Reformation of Our Worship* (Carey Kingsgate Press) 19; discusses many kindred and complementary ideas.
34. H. M. d'Aubigné *The Reformation in England* ed. S. M. Houghton (Banner of Truth) 1962, I, 31.
35. *Book of Common Prayer*, 'Of Ceremonies'.
36. For simple introductions to the subject readers might well see H. E. Hopkins, *Morning and Evening Prayer* (Hodder—Prayerbook Commentaries) 1963, pp. 27-35, as well as S. F. Winward *op. cit.* and (published since this was written) J. I. Packer, *Tomorrow's Worship* (Church Book Room Press—Prayer Book Reform Series) 1966, chap. 3, though much of the booklet is relevant to other aspects of the present topic as well.
37. Acts 1: 14; 2: 44, 46; 4: 24; 5: 12; 15: 22; Rom. 15: 6-30; 1 Cor. 14: 23; 10: 17.
38. 1 Cor. 11: 17-22; 14: 40; 1 Thess. 5: 20, 21; Jas. 2: 2ff.
39. e.g. 1 Cor. 14: 4, 5, 14, 15, 26.
40. Compare St. Matthew's and St. Luke's account of the giving of the Lord's Prayer: 'Pray then like this' (Matt. 6: 9) a *pattern* for free prayer; 'When you pray, say . . .' (Luke 11: 2) a *form* of set prayer. Our worship should use both.
41. See generally, R. P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott), 1965.
42. Phil. 4: 18; Heb. 13: 5.

43. It is perhaps in the light of such a pattern that the prevailing pattern of Brethren Assembly worship meetings may be seen to be almost exactly back to front. Praise, adoration and worship come first, the dramatic memorial or reminder which might be expected to give rise to praise is usually staged after it is all but over, and the nearest approach to an expression of repentance or acknowledgement of sin is often left to be inferred from consciences vowing to do better in future after hearing an exhortation at the very end of the assembly; the 'exclusives' at least placed the partaking of the elements at the *beginning* of the meeting!
44. 'As often as we communicate in the symbols of our Saviour's body, we mutually bind ourselves to all the offices of love, that none of us may do anything to offend his brother or omit anything by which he can assist him when necessity demands and opportunity occurs'. J. Calvin, *Institutes* 4. xvii. 44.
45. Since this was written there has appeared a new booklet *The Gospel in the Prayer Book* by J. I. Packer (Church Book Room Press) in which Dr. Packer demonstrates this clearly and develops ideas introduced in *Tomorrow's Worship*, see note 35 supra.
46. Mk. 7: 7; Jn. 5: 36, 40.
47. 'Mr. R. T. Grant told me in 1898 that G. V. Wigram, ere he died in 1879, bitterly lamented the fact that Brethren had been "blowing ecclesiastical bubbles" and "playing church" and that he felt God could not go on with them in such folly. He passed away just as his prophetic words were in course of fulfilment'. H. A. Ironside, *A Historical Sketch of the Brethren Movement*.
48. C. S. Lewis *Letters to Malcom: Chiefly on Prayer* (Fontana) 1966, 12.
49. W. B. Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren*, 121.

The most isolated Christian does not come to God like the pagan mystic, as the alone to the Alone. Even if he does not use a traditional formula like the Lord's Prayer or the Gloria, he prays within a whole framework of Christian ideas received from others. When his prayer is most spontaneous and from his own heart, the belief according to which he prays, the general type of his prayer, and much—probably most—of his actual phrasing are still largely drawn from what he has learned from others—his teachers, Christian services he has attended in the past, his mother, his Bible, many different sources. Ultimately it all comes to him, even the use of his Bible, from the tradition evolved in the worshiping church.

Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*

An unexpected feature of his public prayers was that he would use in his extempore exercise memorised sections of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England. There was a classic occasion one Sunday morning at Bethesda. He had used a prayer from the Communion Service. When the members of the congregation were leaving, an elderly member, who vigorously held that all 'set prayers' were wrong, was heard to remark to his neighbour: 'Mr. Short prayed very beautifully this morning. At times he sounded almost inspired'.

Capper and Johnson, *Arthur Rendle Short*, p. 162